

**CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)**  
**OPENING STATEMENT FOR HUBBLE HEARING**  
**February 2, 2005**

I want to welcome everyone here this morning for our hearing on the vexing question of what to do about the Hubble Space Telescope. Here's our quandary: On the one hand everyone acknowledges that the Hubble has been a sparkling jewel in the crown of American science, but on the other there is disagreement about how and whether to save it. And that disagreement will come to a head in the coming weeks once the proposed budget for fiscal 2006 is released – regardless of whether it actually zeroes out a Hubble mission, as has been widely rumored.

So our goal this morning is to do our homework for the upcoming debate. We have before us leading authorities on the Hubble, representing a variety of viewpoints. And their answers to our questions will help Congress choose among the options for the Hubble – letting it die, saving it with a Shuttle mission, saving it with a robotic mission, or sending up a new version of the telescope.

I think that Congress faces three fundamental questions regarding the Hubble in today's fiscal environment. The broadest is: Is it worth saving the Hubble even if that means taking money away from other NASA programs such as exploration? Second, and more narrowly, we need to ask: Is it worth saving the Hubble even if that means taking money away from other NASA science programs? And finally, if the answer to either of those questions is yes, then we need to ask: What's the best way to save the Hubble (or at least its science) in terms of cost and risk.

I come to today's hearing as an agnostic on all three questions.

The first question on my list – about the priority of Hubble in relation to other NASA programs – is in some ways beyond the scope of today’s hearing, but what we hear today will help us evaluate it. As I said, I don’t have a view on that now. But let me reiterate that I think all aspects of space science and earth science need to be viewed as continuing priorities for NASA even as the exploration initiative moves forward.

If the ultimate payoff of exploration is a changed view of the world and of the universe, then science like that performed by Hubble certainly is a model of exploration.

We will get some answers today to the second question on my list – about Hubble’s relation to other science priorities. Astronomy is a model for other fields in its creation of a consensus list of priorities for every decade. Dr. Taylor in his written testimony gives a remarkably clear and straightforward answer to our question about science priorities. I will be very interested to hear our other witnesses comment on his thoughts.

Finally, on the narrow question of how (rather than whether) to save the Hubble, I am also eager to hear our witnesses interact today. I am especially eager to hear Dr. Lanzerotti’s responses to Mr. Cooper’s testimony about the feasibility of robotics, and Dr. Norman’s responses to Dr. Lanzerotti’s testimony about the viability of “rehosting” the Hubble instruments.

So, I hope we can clarify today what’s at stake in upcoming Hubble debate. I would dearly love to save the telescope. It has outperformed everyone’s fondest hopes and has become a kind of mascot for science, maybe even for our planet. One can’t help but root for it.

I'll always remember when Sean O'Keefe and I were having lunch in the Member's Dining Room one day last year, and one of the waiters came up to him and said, "Save that Hubble!" And I had not put him up to it.

But this can't be an emotional decision or one based on what we would do in an alternative universe that lacked fiscal constraints or uncertainty. We have to make hard choices about whether a Hubble mission is worth it now, when moving ahead is likely to have an adverse impact on other programs, including quite possibly other programs in astronomy. The whole matter is, as I said at the outset, vexing. I hope that by the end of this hearing, I'll be better prepared to make those hard choices.

Mr. Gordon?